Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph from Column 1, line 56 – column 2, line 10 with the following amended paragraph:

--The scalpel of the invention provides practitioners with a scalpel that has the feel and weighting of a traditional reusable scalpel with the benefits of a fresh blade and a shield that substantially prevents inadvertent access to the sharp blade and that is intuitively movable from the distal position where the blade is protected to the proximal position to expose the blade. The shield of the scalpel of the invention is releasable from the proximal position by the practitioner's direct downward pressure on a digital activation section. The shield includes ergonomic grips to direct the practitioner's hand to a position for mounting the cartridge on the handle where it is unlikely that there will be inadvertent release of the shield for movement from the [proximal] distal position where the blade is protected to the [distal] proximal position where the blade is exposed. The replaceable cartridge that includes the blade allows the personnel charged with arming and disarming the scalpel to handle only a protected blade and substantially prevents operating room personnel from being exposed to the blade during set-ups and transfers of equipment during procedures and substantially prevents exposures to used blades during disarming and clean-up procedures. --

Please replace the paragraph at Column 2, lines 44-45 with the following:

--FIG. 6 shows a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the blade holder with the blade attached; --

Please replace the paragraph at column 2, lines 60-62 with the following:

--FIG. 13 is a perspective view in [part] partial section of an alternative handle embodiment having a button for locking the shield in position over the blade;--

Please replace the paragraph at column 3, lines 5-7 with the following:

--FIG. 18 is a partial perspective view of the cartridge being mounted to the handle [of] to form the scalpel of the invention;--